

Missionary

POLITICAL CONDITIONS IN CHINA.

To the Men's League,
First Presbyterian Church,
Richmond, Va.

Dear Friends: Perhaps a few lines as to what is going on in China during these epoch making days may be of some interest to you. No doubt you have had plenty of telegraphic news, but that is usually brief, often sensational and sometimes unreliable. The world will be guessing for a long time just what has been taking place in Peking in the royal palace. You, who are ten thousand miles away, know about as much of the inwardness of the situation as those of us who are near at hand. The gates of the Inner City are carefully guarded, and it is wonderful how affairs inside are so secretly kept from the world outside. However, we know that the Emperor Kuang Hsu has, as the Chinese say, "ascended on the dragon to be guest on high." The Empress Dowager has also departed this life. The official announcement states that the Emperor died on November 14, and the Empress dowager on November 15. Both had been reported ill, but their real condition had not been revealed. It seems very strange that they should have passed away at the same time, and there are various explanations given by the people, none of which explain anything. The only thing to do is to accept the fact that both are gone and make the best of it.

The following is a part of the notification sent out from Peking re the Imperial mourning as translated in the North China Daily News:

"Whereas their Majesties, the Emperor and the Empress Grand Dowager, have ascended upon the dragon to be guests on high, it is therefore proper that their parting notifications should be issued. . . . The notification will be given to the Ministry of War to be issued to the governors of each province. On the day that the proclamation arrives in each province the civil and military officials, in conjunction with the gentry and literati, old and young, the fringe taken off from their hats and in mourning clothes, will go to the suburbs, and, kneeling on the ground, reverently receive it. On their return to their Yamens, they will kneel three times and kowtow nine times, and still kneeling will listen to the reading of the proclamation. When it is finished, they will rise, and, lamenting, will again perform three kneelings and nine kowtows. The civil and military officials will thenceforward wear complete mourning dress for twenty-seven days, and for three days will lament morning and evening in conjunction with the gentry and literati. The wives of the officers will also wear mourning clothes for twenty-seven days, and all the officers of the provinces will refrain from marrying during the year. Neither must they have any music. All the military and the people of the provinces will wear mourning for twenty-seven days; for one month they will not marry, and for one hundred days they will not have music. The officials, military and

people will not shave their heads for one hundred days. The Viceroys and Governors and such officials will refrain from burning incense before the gods (acts of public worship)."

In accordance with the above, the rites and ceremonies of official mourning were observed here in Kashing. I went to the temple to see the ceremony, but, unfortunately, arrived too late for that day and had no opportunity to go again. Tablets to the Emperor and the Empress Dowager were placed on a table and incense was burning before them; the officials prostrated themselves before these on the ground and lamented the death of China's rulers. All the schools in the city, including our mission school, were closed for three days. On Sunday in our mission chapel, a special sermon was preached on the duty of Christian Chinese in the present crisis and prayers were offered for the government, the church officers leading in these prayers. On the night before the public mourning began, the city was alive with weddings. All night long we heard the firing of crackers and the sound of music and at 11 o'clock saw two wedding processions on the street. No more weddings can take place for twenty-seven days, and even then there can be no wedding music until the hundred days have gone by. A Chinese gentleman does not consider that he is respectable unless he shaves his head about once in seven days; think of his shaggy appearance after one hundred days without shaving. No doubt many of our school boys will rejoice over not having to shave as they do not care so much for their personal appearance. I understand that the government will pay the barbers a small stipend during these idle days, though they say they have to "eat a great deal of bitterness," as the stipend is not sufficient to support them. It is safe to say that the barbers are sincerely sorry for the calamity that has come to the country.

As the late emperor had no son, an heir to the throne was chosen by the empress dowager. The new emperor is a child only two years of age; his father, a younger brother of the deceased emperor, is regent for his son. The regent, though only twenty-five years of age, is said to be very progressive and wide awake. He is the prince who was sent to Germany to apologize for the murder of the German minister by the Boxers. The papers report that he is taking into his counsel Chang Chih-tung and Yuan Hsih-kai, two of the wisest of China's statesmen. Many thought that the Chinese would take advantage of the opportunity to seize the throne for a Chinaman, thus wresting it from the Manchus, but so far there has been no disturbance at all and there is every reason to think now that the leaders against the Manchu dynasty do not consider that the time has come to make a change. There is a great desire throughout the country for the constitutional government which has been promised. As the regent will likely favor this and other reforms, a revolution will no doubt be averted. It is reported that all is quiet and orderly at Peking. An attempted mutiny of soldiers at Anking, a city up the Yang-tse river, is the only disturbance that has occurred, and affairs in the capital do not seem to have had anything to do with that. I do not know what sort of reports news agencies may be